

Making room for more games: metaphilosophical typology and the problem of African philosophy

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The question concerning the philosophy of philosophy (metaphilosophy) has received little attention in philosophical discourses in the last few decades, a case in point being the debate on African philosophy. People often argue the existence or non-existence of African philosophy without explaining their own understanding of the nature of philosophy. This article introduces a metaphilosophical conceptual grid as a means to address this issue. A distinction is made between different kinds of philosophy, as well as different types of philosophers. The grid is then applied to the debate on African philosophy. One of the main functions of the proposed grid is to ensure that different discourses are not confused with one another.

Meer speelruimte: metafilosofiese tipologie en die probleem van Afrika-filosofie

Die vraag rakende die filosofie van filosofie (metafilosofie) het min aandag geniet in filosofiese diskoerse die laaste paar dekades, 'n bewys hiervan is die debat rondom Afrika-filosofie. Mense beredeneer dikwels die bestaan al dan nie van Afrika-filosofie sonder om hul eie verstaan van die aard van filosofie te verduidelik. In hierdie artikel word 'n metafilosofiese konseptuele rooster voorgestel as een moontlike benadering tot hierdie probleem. 'n Onderskeid word gemaak tussen verskillende soorte filosofie asook verskillende tipes filosowe. Die rooster word dan toegepas op die debat rakende Afrika-filosofie. Een van die funksies van die rooster is om te verseker dat verskillende diskoerse nie met mekaar verwar word nie.

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Throughout the ages, various definitions of philosophy have been introduced, criticised and ultimately abandoned — in particular within the tradition of Western philosophy. As a result, most people have accepted that it is impossible to give an encompassing definition of philosophy which is universally accepted. Consequently, the metaphilosophical question has been brushed aside to such an extent that it has nearly disappeared from philosophical discourses.

However, due to the emergence of the Philosophical Counselling Movement, as well as the ongoing debate regarding the existence of African philosophy, the question regarding the nature of philosophy has once again become the topic for heated debate in recent years. Philosophical consultation, as a movement within the Western philosophical tradition, emerged in the 1980s when academic philosophers became frustrated with the irrelevance of Western academic philosophy in people's everyday lives. They argued that there should be more focus on the therapeutic value of philosophy, dating back to the time of Antiquity when philosophy was not an academic discipline as we know it today, but a way of life. The debate regarding African philosophy, which commenced in the second half of the previous century, has been argued mostly in academic circles. The issue at stake is whether there can be talk of an African philosophical tradition in the same sense as there is a Western and an Eastern philosophical tradition.

The controversies arising from these debates highlight the need for a discussion about the nature of philosophy. However, most professional philosophers nowadays prefer to specialise in segments (or aspects) of a specific philosophical tradition, instead of engaging in a metaphilosophical debate. Few, if any, philosophers will explain their own understanding of the nature of philosophy, before starting to advocate the existence or the non-existence of African philosophy or the merits of philosophical consultation. The result of this is, as McGhee (2000: 9) argues, that philosophy is even more contested:

There are different conceptions of what it is to do philosophy at all, and there are these guardians of particular conceptions of philosophy, who are not prepared to recognize anything that falls outside the terms

of the conception they guard, in a tense conceit of selfhood. Certainly there are many activities embraced within the field of philosophy, all of which have their place, the difficulty comes when people identify philosophy itself with one particular set of activities.

This article will attempt to describe the nature of philosophy as it applies to the Western, African and Eastern traditions of philosophy. As Van den Berg (2003: 284) rightly notes, the challenge is to redefine philosophy as something that “values, recognizes and embraces a diversity of cultural heritages and experiences”. The focus will therefore be not only on philosophy as an academic discipline, but also on philosophy in the wider context, that is, on philosophy as a way of life. Appiah (1998: 109) warns against relying too heavily on restrictive definitions, pointing to the disagreement among philosophers in the Western philosophical tradition about the tasks, topics and character of philosophy. Instead of introducing yet another restrictive, technical definition of philosophy, I will describe the nature of philosophy by differentiating between different aspects of philosophy which I will name bedroom, tearoom, boardroom, consultation room and classroom philosophy. In other words I will make systematic use of a metaphor centred on the concept of room space.

In the discourse on the nature of philosophy it is important to address not only the question as to what philosophy is, but also the question as to who qualifies to be a philosopher. The latter is often neglected in the metaphilosophical debate, while such an investigation could shed some light on the nature of philosophy. To facilitate such an investigation I will again make use of another systematic metaphor, this time centred on the concepts of play and game. To make this more concrete I will orient myself to the game of golf and will distinguish between different kinds of philosophers, namely Putt-Putt, amateur and professional philosophers. I will propose a metaphilosophical grid consisting of the different types of philosophers as well as the different kinds of philosophy, and conclude with some critical remarks regarding the application of such a conceptual grid as a philosophical tool to the problem of philosophy on the African continent.

1. The different faces of philosophy

In order to identify the different faces of philosophy one has to start by defining philosophy in the broadest possible sense. In the Western philosophical tradition, philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle followed this approach when they stated that the essence of philosophy may well be captured in “the sense of wonder”. Cottingham (2003: 2) describes this as follows:

For our human existence is mysterious — something strange, frightening, to be wondered at. Philosophy, said Aristotle is the child of wonder, and the capacity to be disturbed by what is ordinarily taken for granted is the hallmark of that questioning spirit that is inseparable from human nature itself.

This sense of wonder is characteristic of the human condition and throughout the ages people have been wondering about how life should be understood and lived. Although one can argue that the reason behind this “wondering” was the search for wisdom, identifying philosophy with wisdom (the search for or love of wisdom) has proved to be just as problematic, since there has been scant agreement regarding the meaning of “wisdom” throughout history. Based on the Stoic conception of philosophy, this sense of wonder can be described by formulating three questions that form the basis of what people wonder about, namely what is humankind, what is the world and what constitutes a meaningful life. However, the way in which the Greek and Roman philosophers described philosophy must be viewed in a specific cultural and historical perspective. The development of science since then implies that this sense of wonder is not characteristic of only philosophy, but of all the special sciences. It would therefore be a mistake to identify the sense of wonder with philosophy in a way that excludes the other disciplines. This sense of wonder would be characteristic of all fields of knowledge and in fact captures the essence of science.

Given the abovementioned issues, the challenge one faces when discussing the nature of philosophy is the following: How can philosophy be defined in the broadest sense possible, while simultaneously capturing its uniqueness that distinguishes it from other fields of knowledge? One possible way of dealing with this issue is to differentiate between different faces of philosophy.

1.1 Bedroom philosophy

I use bedroom philosophy as a synonym for what is generally known as an individual's philosophy of life. This entails the way in which a person thinks about the world and about life. One's bedroom philosophy is personal and private and influences not only who one is, but also how one behaves. Bedroom philosophy is therefore not a systematic, logically structured, written-down philosophy and is often influenced subconsciously by life-experiences. Most people will affirm that they have a philosophy of life, and Howard (2000: 371) rightly remarks:

When people say that they do not know any philosophy, what is really meant is that they know only one philosophy, but they have no means of locating or assessing it. As a result, it structures everything they do and care about. It also prevents them from considering alternatives or placing immediate preoccupations into a larger perspective.

Even Karl Popper, an academic philosopher, renowned for among other things, abstract theoretical philosophy of science, shares the view that everybody has some philosophy:

Everybody has some philosophy: we all, you, and I, everybody. Whether or not we know it, we all take a great number of things for granted. These uncritical assumptions are often of a philosophical character. Sometimes they are true; but more often these philosophies of ours are mistaken. Whether we are right or wrong can be found out only by a critical examination of these philosophies, which we take uncritically for granted. This critical examination is, I suggest, the task of philosophy, and the reason for its existence (Magee 1986: 87).

Although it is generally acknowledged that ordinary people have a philosophy of life, little attention has previously been paid to formal discussions in this regard. This issue has received little, if any, attention from professional academic philosophers in the Western tradition. This is illustrated by Cottingham (1998: 18) who captures the typical response from a teacher of philosophy to a student's question regarding the meaning of life, as follows:

We can help you clear up some conceptual confusions, the academic teachers of the subject seemed to be saying to their pupils, but if you hanker for actual guidance on how to live, you should (perhaps, if you are really that inclined) go to the preacher, or the guru, or the psychoanalyst.

It was only recently, and to a large extent due to development of philosophical consultation that issues relating to bedroom philosophy have been addressed more formally outside the academic realm.

1.2 Tearoom philosophy

Tearoom philosophy is closely related to bedroom philosophy. Some philosophers distinguish between public and private philosophy, especially on issues concerning morality. In terms of the different faces of philosophy one can state that private morality correlates with bedroom philosophy and public morality with tearoom philosophy. The latter shares the characteristics of not necessarily being a written, systematic philosophy, but differs from bedroom philosophy in that it is a public voicing of opinion. Tearoom philosophy is not limited to the content of bedroom philosophy, and is defined by the platform on which the issues are addressed.

The way in which tearoom philosophy is conveyed can take on different forms. Most tearoom philosophy happens informally in discussions around a fire, dinner table or during teatime at the office, for example. But, tearoom philosophy can also be shared more formally. For instance, in the popular talk shows (whether on radio or television), members from the general public are invited to share their views on different issues. Contributions in the letter columns of newspapers and magazines are also examples of tearoom philosophy being shared in public. The content of tearoom philosophy discussions varies and includes topics such as death, the relative value of money, and socio-political and ethical issues.

1.3 Boardroom philosophy

Boardroom philosophy as a systematic metaphor should be understood in a wider context than merely the business world. This kind of philosophy includes the ideas behind policymaking whether by corporations, governments or non-governmental organisations. The contributions by classroom philosophy to a comparable context have been limited mostly to the field of applied philosophy and, in particular, applied ethics (medical, political and environmental ethics, for example). The American philosopher Martha Nussbaum's involvement

in a project organised through the World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER), a part of the United Nations University, is a good example in this regard (Nussbaum & Sen 1993). Other examples of boardroom philosophy are: when government releases a white paper on education, or the Dutch Reformed Church releases a statement regarding homosexuality, or a merger between two companies takes place and a joint statement is released regarding the way they see the road ahead.

Boardroom philosophy shares some of the characteristics of tearoom philosophy in that the majority of participants are non-professional philosophers. Industrial psychologists, political scientists, politicians and many other non-professional philosophers have been involved in this kind of philosophy, more often so than professional philosophers.

1.4 Classroom philosophy

Classroom philosophy depicts the philosophical activity commonly known as academic philosophy. In the Western philosophical tradition, this kind of philosophy takes centre stage, and many people will view Western academic philosophy as the only “real” philosophy.

Attempting to define classroom philosophy within a specific philosophical tradition tends to be as complicated as answering the metaphilosophical question. The reason for this is that there are different schools of thought within classroom philosophy. Thus the manner in which philosophy is defined will depend on the specific school of thought from within which the matter is argued. For instance, in the Reformational tradition, it will be argued that while all the so-called special sciences (which supposedly have their origin in philosophy) study an aspect of being, the distinctive characteristic of philosophy is that philosophy and only philosophy focuses on the coherence of these aspects of reality. In the Anglo-Saxon tradition many will defend a strict separation between metaphysics and logic, on the one hand, and morality, on the other. To many the most obvious division within the Western philosophical tradition remains the one between Continental and Analytical philosophy.

Although the contribution of classroom philosophy (especially in the Western philosophical tradition) is immense, Craig (2002: 9) warns against limiting the nature of philosophy to this specific aspect of philosophy:

University philosophy departments are mostly quite small. In consequence, so is the range of their expertise, which tends to cluster around current (sometimes also local) academic fashion — it must do, since it is normally they who make it. Besides, undergraduate courses are, for obvious reasons, quite short, and therefore have to be selective on pain of gross superficiality. So the natural assumption that philosophy is what university philosophy departments teach, though I certainly wouldn't call it false, is restrictive and misleading, and ought to be avoided.

The nature of classroom philosophy depends to a large extent on where and by whom it is taught. Nevertheless, one may assume that the curriculum will consist of some of the traditional areas of philosophy (metaphysics, logic, ethics, philosophical anthropology, theory of knowledge, aesthetics) as well as areas in which philosophy combines with other disciplines (philosophy of science, philosophy of language, political philosophy). Although academic philosophy in South Africa is only offered at university level, I take the term classroom philosophy to include all forms of formal teaching, including the teaching of philosophy at school level.

1.5 Consultation room philosophy

Classroom philosophy forms the foundation of consultation room philosophy, but the latter differs from the former in the manner in which it is communicated and applied outside the academic realm. Within consultation room philosophy, one can distinguish between consultation with individuals (where the focus is on bedroom philosophy) and consultation with professional groups and organisations (where the focus is on boardroom philosophy). Ran Lahav (1996: 259) describes the former as

[A]n approach for addressing the dilemmas, predicaments, and life-issues of the person in the street through philosophical self-examination [...] The role of the counselor is to lead a philosophical self-examination and thus to help counselees develop their philosophical understanding of themselves and their world, and

empower them to deal with their problems and lives in their own way. These two goals — philosophical self-understanding or wisdom (*philo-sophia* = love of wisdom) as an end in itself, and overcoming personal problems — receive different emphases by different philosophical practitioners, some of whom aim mainly at the former while others focus on the latter.

Philosophical consultation for professional groups and organisations (including business and government) can include a whole range of topics, ranging from the formulation of mission statements and codes of conduct to the designing, implementation and evaluation of ethics compliance programmes. Marinoff (1999: 269) gives the following example:

You can't just fax (or e-mail) a code of ethics to your workforce and expect them to apply automatically. Employees need to take part in concrete ethical exercises to understand the application of abstract ethical principles and also to anticipate and resolve potential conflicts between their private moralities and their professional codes of conduct.

Consultation room philosophy is controversial. Some of the fiercest criticism originates within classroom philosophy, while many psychologists and industrial psychologists are of the opinion that philosophical consultation is intruding on their specialised fields. In defining consultation room philosophy one needs to remember that its distinctive feature is not so much the topics that are addressed but the manner (method) in which they are addressed.

2. Different kinds of philosophers

Thus far I have argued for a systematic division of types of philosophy. Now I wish to address a related issue, namely that a similar typology can be constructed for different types of philosophers. For this second typology I will switch to another systematic metaphor, namely the game metaphor.

In general people are reluctant to refer to themselves as philosophers. When asking someone whether s/he knows any philosopher, s/he will most probably give names such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle or perhaps even Descartes or Derrida. Not many will refer to

people teaching philosophy at institutions as philosophers, and ironically enough, many such teachers will refrain from using the title themselves. But if it is true that all human beings have at least some kind of bedroom philosophy, then it makes sense to conclude that all human beings are per definition philosophers (among other things). This has recently been echoed by authors of more popularised publications on philosophy. Rowlands (2005: 2) states that

(W)e're all philosophers, whether we know it or not, and whether we've ever picked up a book of philosophy or not. Philosophy is all around us; it's in the culture we inhabit. It trickles out to us from the movies we watch, and the magazines and newspapers we read [...] it's in the TV programmes we have been faithfully watching for as long as we can remember. Because of this, philosophy is in us. All of us are the authors, co-authors, producers, directors, stars and guest stars in various philosophical questions, issues, disputes, conflations and confusions — even though most of the time we have no idea of this.

Howard (2000: 368), a qualified psychologist who wrote a book on the relevance of philosophical ideas for psychology is of the opinion that:

Everyone is an amateur psychologist in that we all try, more or less often, to understand and predict the behaviour of other people. Likewise, everyone is an amateur philosopher in that we all ask, occasionally or regularly, why we are here, how to make sense of what we do, who we are, what is important and where are we heading.

Due to the nature of bedroom philosophy and the fact that there are also other aspects to philosophy, it is important to differentiate between different kinds of philosophers. I will make such a distinction by comparing philosophy with the game of golf. Using this systematic metaphor, I conclude that it is necessary to distinguish between Putt-Putt, amateur and professional philosophers.

2.1 Putt-Putt philosophers

Let us assume that Putt-Putt (also known as mini-golf) constitutes the basic form of the game of golf, for several reasons including possible lack of interest or means to pursue the full game of golf, virtually anybody can have fun playing a round of Putt-Putt, regardless of age and level of so-called ball skills.

Similarly, many people do not feel the need to consciously and consistently reflect on life and its meaning. And when they do, they might find it difficult to articulate their specific views in a systematic and logically coherent way, in the same manner as, for instance, a professional philosopher. People who choose to play the game in such a way may be labelled as Putt-Putt philosophers (according to my systematic metaphor). When seeking cross-comparisons between the previous and the present typology, one can say that Putt-Putt philosophers have a Bedroom philosophy and may at times participate in tearoom philosophy and even be involved in boardroom philosophy, on account of a particular profession, for example. However, Putt-Putt philosophers do not partake in classroom philosophy or consultation room philosophy. If they do either of the latter they will become amateur philosophers.

2.2 Amateur philosophers

The majority of people playing golf do it for social and recreational purposes. These golfers are the amateur golfers, also known as social golfers. The time and effort amateur golfers put into their game depend on how serious they are about it, and therefore their skills and capabilities vary. In order to ensure that every golfer is offered a fair chance there is a handicap system in place.

The same can be mentioned about amateur philosophers. One's philosophical curiosity varies. There are different ways in which a person can bring down his/her philosophical handicap, so to speak. Some have a natural ability to engage in philosophical discourse, and the most common route is by reading. Another is to enroll for an academic course in philosophy, whether on pre- or postgraduate level. One can also engage in consultation room philosophy.

An amateur philosopher with a high handicap is closer to being a Putt-Putt philosopher, while an amateur philosopher with a low handicap is closer to being a professional philosopher. However, not only professional philosophers teach philosophy. For instance, ethical theories are taught by academics in media studies, medicine, economics, and so on. The history of philosophy plays an important role in understanding theology and law. Many scientists and professionals in these fields are in many instances as competent as professional

philosophers in teaching special areas of philosophy. In terms of the conceptual grid developed in this instance, one can respect them as low handicap amateur philosophers (or non-professional philosophers).

2.3 Professional philosophers

Professional golfers make up a small part of the total number of golfers in the world. In order to become a professional golfer one needs to have more than natural talent. To earn a living from golf involves total commitment to the game, since it becomes a way of life.

Examples of professional philosophers are people who either teach philosophy formally, or work in the public and/or private sector as philosophy consultants. The latter can give advice to various clients ranging from corporations to individuals. All professional philosophers have studied classroom philosophy and have at least a postgraduate qualification in philosophy. However, this does not imply that any person with a postgraduate qualification in philosophy is a professional philosopher.

3. The metaphilosophical grid

The discussion thus far can be schematically summarised in the form of the following conceptual grid.

		The different faces of philosophy					
		Spatial / Room metaphor					
		Metaphilosophy	Bedroom	Tearoom	Boardroom	Consultation room	Classroom
Different kinds of philosophers	Game / Golf metaphor	Putt-Putt	A B	A B	B		
		Amateur (high handicap)	C D E	C D E	C	C D	E
		Amateur (low handicap)	F G	F G	G	F G	F G
		Professional	H I	H I		I	H
			J	J	J	J	J

It is important to note that the differentiation between Putt-Putt, amateur and professional philosophers should not be interpreted in some kind of hierarchical order — as if the one is better or more desirable than the other. The distinction should rather be regarded as a division of labour, in terms of the different “offices” (in the sense of tasks) that philosophers can occupy. The professional philosopher is the only one occupying the office of consultant (consultation room philosophy) and/or teacher (classroom philosophy), and amateur philosophers will occupy the office of client (consultation room philosophy) and student (classroom philosophy), respectively. As noted, the exception to this are instances where low-handicap amateur philosophers teach aspects of academic philosophy secondary to their main discipline. But as soon as they start teaching academic philosophy as a main subject, they become professional philosophers.

The idea behind the distinction is that, as in golf, what all philosophers have in common is a love of “the game” and the enjoyment and meaning it adds to their lives when playing with others. Professional and non-professional philosophers can always learn something from one another. A Putt-Putt philosopher can enlighten a professional philosopher with an insight which the latter has not thought of. In some instances the Bedroom philosophy of a non-professional philosopher may well be in “better shape” than that of a professional academic philosopher. Professional philosophers are often guilty of not engaging enough in tearoom philosophy, and while their philosophical skills and knowledge can contribute to such debates, the main contributors are still non-professional philosophers. The same can be said of boardroom philosophy. Van den Berg argues (with reference to Africa) that philosophy does not develop in isolation, but that other disciplines influence philosophy.

The history of philosophical thinking in Africa is an involved, interdisciplinary and dynamic process. It incorporates the contributions of a great many other disciplines such as anthropology, African literature, contextual theology, political studies and history (Van den Berg 2003: 279-80).

This is also true for philosophical thinking in the West. The contributions by non-professional philosophers to classroom philosophy (and the other kinds of philosophy) should not be underestimated.

Considering the differentiation between bedroom, tearoom, boardroom, consultation room and classroom philosophy, it is important not to view them as five separate enterprises that have no relevance to each other. The one builds on, and feeds from, the other. Bedroom philosophy is fundamental to all the others, while one's experience in classroom and/or consultation room philosophy will influence one's bedroom and/or tearoom philosophy. Thus, although each one is unique, there is simultaneously a genre coherence between them. One of the main functions of the above grid is to ensure that the different discourses are not confused with one another. This danger is pertinent to various communicative situations, one being the discourse on African philosophy, where the distinction between classroom and bedroom philosophy is not upheld.

A more detailed explanation of the proposed metaphilosophical grid will now follow. Martha Nussbaum might in an imaginary interview share something of her bedroom philosophy, referring to a book she wrote for teaching (classroom philosophy) and using that to discuss relevant socio-political issues (tearoom philosophy), while quoting from it in a speech before some United Nations committee (consultation room philosophy). This might result in a change of strategy by the latter organisation (boardroom philosophy). There are obviously many more possibilities.

The letter symbols in the grid have the following meanings:

- A: Most ordinary people.
- B: A businessman sitting on the board of directors of a company, or a politician.
- C: Businessman B seeing a philosophical consultant.
- D: Ordinary citizen going for philosophical consultation.
- E: The typical undergraduate philosophy student.
- F: Your typical postgraduate philosophy student attending philosophical consultation sessions.
- G: Businessman C with a degree in philosophy.
- H: A full-time philosophy lecturer at a university.

I: A full-time philosophy consultant.

J: A full-time philosophy lecturer and philosophy consultant specialising in boardroom philosophy.

4. Applying the metaphilosophy grid to the debate on African philosophy

The debate on African philosophy takes place mostly among professional philosophers in the context of classroom philosophy. The debate usually concerns the differences or similarities (depending on the perspective from which the issue is raised) between so-called Western philosophy and African philosophy. Such an approach would usually result in a comparison between Western and African philosophy, where Western philosophy will be taken as the standard and African philosophy will be measured against this. For example, Western philosophy will be characterised as a written, rational discourse that is theoretical and systematic in nature, as opposed to African philosophy that has an oral tradition which is pre-theoretical and unsystematic.

When one applies the above analysed grid to such evaluation, it is clear that this type of reasoning is flawed in that the comparison is not between the same kinds of philosophy. The comparison is clearly between Western classroom philosophy and African Bedroom philosophy. African traditional thought (Bedroom philosophy) should be compared with Western folk thought (Bedroom philosophy). Wiredu (1998: 197) is right when he warns that “comparing African traditional thought with Western scientific thought will obviously result in a misleading comparison”. This is a common mistake, often made by Western philosophers.

Unfortunately instead of seeing the basic non-scientific characteristics of African traditional thought as typifying traditional thought in general, Western anthropologists and others besides have tended to take them as defining a peculiar African way of thinking. The ill-effects of this mistake have been not a few (Wiredu 1998: 193).

An assumption often made by Western philosophers is that an oral tradition is per definition inferior to a written one. The fact that the majority of philosophy has been preserved in written form in the

Western tradition is wonderful, but one needs to remember that philosophy can be preserved by other means such as wisdom-sayings, proverbs, stories, mythology, religious doctrines and socio-political organisations. This is true for all the different kinds of philosophy represented in the grid. Even within the Western philosophical tradition, much of tearoom philosophy has no written recorded history, not to mention bedroom philosophy. What is often forgotten is that Western philosophy did not originate as an academic discipline as it is known today, but as the product of a long pre-academic history. Translated into the language of the grid one can state that Western classroom philosophy developed out of Western bedroom and tearoom philosophy.

Another fallacy in the debate on African philosophy is that rationality is depicted as a uniquely Western phenomenon. One needs to remember that not all Westerners are masters of theoretical thought. Wiredu (1998: 194) rightly points out that “rational knowledge is not the preserve of the modern West nor is superstition a peculiarity of the African peoples”. He supports this argument with the following example:

It is not uncommon, for example, to see a Western scientist, fully apprised of the universal reign of law in natural phenomena, praying to God, a spirit, to grant rain and a good harvest and other things besides (Wiredu 1998: 195).

The four trends Oruka (1983) identified within African philosophy have taken centre stage in the discourse on African philosophy, namely sage philosophy, ethnophilosophy, political-ideological philosophy and professional philosophy. Sage philosophy and ethnophilosophy are both forms of folk philosophy, whereas sage philosophy is the philosophy of an individual and ethnophilosophy the communal thought of a group. Nationalist-ideological philosophy is political philosophy based on traditional African socialism and familyhood, and professional philosophy consists of the modification and application of Western academic philosophy to African circumstances. Debated mainly within classroom philosophy, it comes as no surprise that there is great disagreement among philosophers (including African philosophers) on these issues.

In terms of the philosophical grid, one can make the following comparisons: sage philosophy equals bedroom philosophy; ethnophilosophy equals tearoom philosophy; nationalist-ideological philosophy equals boardroom philosophy, and professional philosophy equals classroom philosophy.

These four trends can also be applied to the Western philosophical tradition. For example, within Western academic philosophy we can distinguish between sage philosophy (the early Greek thinkers, such as Socrates), ethnophilosophy (cultural-anthropological philosophy), nationalist-ideological philosophy (political philosophy), and professional philosophy (the various subdisciplines such as logic and ethics, for example).

In terms of the metaphilosophical grid, the answer to the question as to whether there is philosophy indigenous to Africa, is a definite yes. If it is true that all people are philosophers and that all people have at least a bedroom philosophy, then it is also true that there are philosophers (in this sense) in Africa. But if the question is whether there can be talk of African philosophy as an academic discipline in the same way as Western academic philosophy, then the answer is clearly negative.

5. Conclusion

The metaphilosophical grid introduced in this article should not be viewed as an attempt to give a final solution to the problem of defining philosophy, but rather as an attempt to stimulate the metaphilosophical debate. This is merely one way, among many others, of describing the nature of philosophy to include as many different aspects of philosophy as possible. The debates on philosophy consultation and African philosophy not only highlight the need for an ongoing discussion on the nature of philosophy, but have already contributed to this discourse.

The present article aimed at reflecting on the nature of philosophy in a way that is accessible to non-professional as well as professional philosophers. The purpose of such a differentiation is to demonstrate that philosophy is not merely an esoteric enterprise to

which an elite few have access, but that all people address ordinary philosophical issues in their everyday lives. Realising this will hopefully empower people, and lead to a new appreciation of the power of reflective thinking applied to oneself, the usefulness of common sense, and more active participation in public debate.

In conclusion, a word to professional philosophers. We should reject out of hand the arrogance with which some professional philosophers in the Western philosophical tradition have dismissed the need to engage in debates regarding the nature of philosophy. Most philosophers agree with the statement of Socrates that the unexamined life is not worth living. In the same spirit it would then be true to say that the unexamined discipline is not worth teaching. Instead of trying in vain to limit philosophy to one or two special areas, philosophers need to rethink their metaphilosophical point of view and position themselves accordingly within it.

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